Intro to Kritikal Authors

John Leotard: The post-modern condition. Kritiks that reason is key. People actually operate on metanarrative levels that explain the totality of a reality, such as capitalism and religion. Leotard is foundational. You may not hear cards from him, but he is footnoted by many other authors.

Nietzsche: Breaks from many modern authors and their optimism. When we analyze subjects, Nietzsche says, we end up with a view of power. We should not be concerned about the abstract. The will to power begins as something that everybody has in a democratic sense to escape the structures that bind us, but it evolves into a more sinister idea. Now, it is only in some of us, and the strong should usher the weak to their destruction.

Frankfurt School: Takes a foundation in Kritikal theory through Karl Marx. Kritiks capitalism and other economic theories to derive how we achieve goods and what we get from our labor. Adorno talks about how our relationships with economic production affect power. Benjamin talked about culture and how our art and our aesthetics are affected by capitalism. Fromm talks about being and how capitalism affects our psyches through commoditization

Heidegger: Looks at what is around us in the physical space and the power we have. Wanted to do metaphysics but only about our spatial relationships and the concept of dasein. We can never discuss things outside of the space where we interact. Kritiks technology by saying the tools use us.

Derrida: Sits by and says we can do nothing, mainly because of his view of language. Derrida says there is nothing outside of the text; we can never get to a pure point where we can see something well absent of interpretation. Derrida also says that the signifier-signified relationship is inadequate. To not challenge assumptions is to live in a meaningless world. Balkin applies Derrida to the law and justice. Badiou criticizes how our misjudgments of time affect the concept of the event. Badiou focuses on the evilness of the Holocaust and preventing genocide at all cost.

Levinas: Discusses encounters with the Other. As soon as people come into the world, their being is always shared; they are never alone. The encounter with the Other is where moral responsibility comes from. Such responsibility is infinite.

Bauman: Talks about post-modern ethics and modern ethics post-Holocaust. Systems that set up the worth of a person are inherently dangerous. Ethics and enlightenment philosophy give people a guidebook on how to act with morality, but there is danger because who gets to write the rules? Listening to other people’s rules can construct atrocious moral systems.

Foucault: The master of power. The way power pops up in sexuality and gender. Biopower – concerns the way in which governments can use and control their systems to control people. Foucault later says that power is everywhere, which enables the possibility of resistance. You can always exercise your will and therefore exercise power.

Deluzie: Talks about how the power of life and death is centered in capitalism and its ability to control our desires. That channeling and controlling of desire is this understanding of how we want what we want and how we get what we want.

Agamben: Looks at the history of sovereignty and the history of the social contract and applies a Kritikal lens to government.

Baudrillard: Regress of signifiers loops back on itself, so we exist in a virtual reality. Much of *The Matrix* reflects on Baudrillard’s work. We need 3rd-world countries to have debt to maintain the virtual reality system. Many of these authors are trying to advocate political action to save the world.

Zizek: Makes a lot of outlandish claims with pop cultural references. Discusses politics and political action. Allows us too understand reality and action in context.

Hart and Negry: Criticize the concept of an empire and neocolonialism. Forward an advocacy of how different ideals like democracy are still worthwhile.

Butler: Need to meditate about how science works. Reflects on gender especially. Concludes with gender is a kind of performing that we do. Talking about male and female is a zone of exclusion because we otherize people who experience gender in different ways.

1. Remember that shenanigan-calling is the spirit of Kritikal writing. Most of the authors don’t have optimistic expectations.
2. Philosophy is political. It wants to avoid over-politicization, however.
3. Sit down and read overviews of post-modern theory to understand most authors. *Critical Interrogations*.
4. Ask the staff questions about philosophy. Go to the Philosophy section of lddebate.org.
5. Kritik literature recurs over and over again regardless of the topic. Use this time to familiarize yourself with the authors.